

SC State University – Black History Month Celebration

February 9, 2006 @ 5:30pm
Belcher Hall Auditorium

Celebrating Community: A Tribute to Black Fraternal, Social and Civic Institutions

Good Evening. As you know from my gracious introduction, I am Sam Glover, Director of the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services. I am both honored and excited to be with you for today's program, and to have the opportunity to offer comments as a part of your celebration of Black History Month. Before beginning, I would like to suggest that although we acknowledge February as Black History Month – honoring those who share our history and heritage, and commemorating their accomplishments (as well as our own) should be cause for celebration 365 days a year.

This is an occasion to reflect on those whose lives have helped to shape our world and whose experiences have paved the way for new generations of opportunity. It is also an occasion to spend time considering what you will do with your opportunities. It is very heartening to see so many eager, motivated, young people in the audience. After so many years of life experiences (and I won't say exactly how many years), I do have some thoughts to share with each of you as you look toward your future after college.

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Before I begin my “formal” remarks, I would like to share just a little more about myself. As you know, I did not begin my career working in government. After many years of managing my own businesses and serving in the military, I was asked by Governor Sanford nearly two years ago to accept the position of the Director for the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services. It was certainly a great privilege to be selected to perform this important role, to serve the citizens of our state, and to have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

Sometimes my agency’s mission seems like one of the best kept secrets of state government in that I have encountered so many people who don’t know what we do or don’t know what “probation and parole” is all about. So let me set the record straight because, although the work is sometimes complex, the underlying missions of my agency are significant but straightforward. The state’s Department of Probation and Parole prepares offenders under our supervision for becoming productive members of the community. We provide assistance to the victims of crimes, the courts and the Parole Board. And we protect the public trust and safety.

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There are about 35,000 people under probation and parole supervision at any given time throughout South Carolina. We have an office in each of the state's 46 counties and our staff members are actively involved in the counties in which they work and serve. As leaders for this organization, my managers and I reinforce the vision and values that guide our agency's work and enable staff to prepare offenders to be good citizens, to contribute to our communities, to help crime victims and to be ever mindful of our role in protecting public safety. My staff members touch the lives of hundreds of South Carolinians each day – offenders and their families, victims and their families, law enforcement officials, service providers, court officials, the public, government colleagues, and so many others. We have to “focus on the future” in order to accomplish the many missions for which we are responsible.

United States General Colin Powell said, "There are no secrets to success—don't waste time looking for them. Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty to those for whom you work, and persistence." I believe that there is some wisdom in those words. But while there may be no magic or secrets to achieving success, some of us who have been around awhile

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know that there are some foundations that, when built in a careful manner, may serve to support you in the search for your own destiny.

Each of you will soon be making decisions about your careers and your places in the world, and these choices will shape your own future. I recommend that you spend quality time thinking about your motivations and visualizing your life as it could be with each option, “trying on” professions as you attempt to see yourself performing that work. Some of you will gain experience through internships and volunteering – both of these avenues will increase your marketability and provide a new and broader perspective on the working world. Seek guidance from mentors such as your professors, from your family and from your close circle of friends. Your college years provide a perfect transitional opportunity for you to create a vision for your future and accomplish the self-introspection that will facilitate a future that you are prepared for and will ultimately thrive in.

Earlier I talked about laying a foundation for your professional and personal life. Some of the components of such a foundation are worthy of more thought and consideration than we may have time to invest today. But acknowledging their

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importance in forging a path toward the future may be a first step in laying the groundwork for the years to come. I would like to spend a few minutes talking about some of these elements in the hope that our time together today will inspire you to consider each in more depth as you develop your own blueprint for what you seek to achieve in life.

The first element in your foundation that I want to talk about is “**Preparation**”. That you are attending college and here today demonstrates your commitment to preparing for a full future, whatever that means to you. That you are pursuing a higher education illustrates that you (and no doubt your family) have a large investment in preparing you for this future. You may think of the investment initially in terms of money, but a little deeper look reveals that it is so much more. The investment also encompasses time and effort and emotions. In addition to education, you have spent a lifetime up to this point developing a system of values that will also serve to prepare you for what is yet to come. Know yourself well and spend time consciously understanding what is important to you – the core values that define the person you are. Your values, your knowledge and your life experiences shape you and prepare you for your future.

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Another building block for your future's foundation is "**Planning**". A wise person once said, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.", and I believe this is true. In business, in government and in everyday life, precious time and resources are lost because people fail to take the time to chart a course. What is a plan? A plan may mean different things to different people. To me, a plan includes setting a specific, overall goal that I am seeking to achieve. Once you have taken the time to identify your goal, the plan also includes outlining the many action steps you will take on the journey to attaining the overall goal. With the action steps identified, it is not such a daunting task to set some milestones in terms of time that you estimate will be required to complete each step. A plan can include whatever other elements are relevant, such as resources that might be needed to fully realize the activity. When you break down the planning process into its most basic components, the act of planning is the same for completing your coursework in Psychology 101 or putting on a conference or planning a wedding or serving as a team leader for an important project. Set goals, identify action steps, estimate a timeline, and put it in writing. The more you practice planning, the better you will get at it.

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An element of your foundation that can get lost in the shuffle is the need to “**prioritize**” the demands of life. I know you sometimes think that life couldn’t possibly get more complicated than it might seem as you go through these college years. Believe me, as you leave these halls and step into the professional arena and as some of you start families, one of the most critical skills you will possess will be your ability to prioritize. In college terms, a “major” in family and faith with a strong “minor” in devotion to the job may be the best solution. Work hard, but also take care of yourself and your loved ones – spiritually, health-wise, and emotionally. There is a delicate “balance” between your personal life and your professional life that you have to strive for and find. Prioritizing life’s demands helps you find that balance.

Be “**Positive**”. Baseball great Hank Aaron said, "I never doubted my ability, but when you hear all your life you're inferior, it makes you wonder if the other guys have something you've never seen before." He said, "If they do, I'm still looking for it." Maybe everyone suffers from time to time with self-doubt or negativism. On the whole however, when you meet life’s challenges with a positive attitude, it is a contagious state of mind. I encounter people everyday who have a mindset

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that anything is possible and for them, it seems like anything IS possible. There is an adage that “whatever you can conceive and believe, you can also achieve”. This philosophy is based on the premise of a positive approach to any dilemma. Have confidence in yourself and your abilities to overcome any obstacle.

The last fundamental building block I will mention is “**perseverance**”. African-American leader and educator Booker T. Washington said, "I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." There will always be challenges and obstacles that will face us and even threaten us. Overcoming them makes us stronger and teaches us life's lessons. It is important to stay focused on your goals, and always remember that neither failure (nor success for that matter) is a permanent state. In persevering, be respectful of others – no one accomplishes anything on his or her own. Novelist and Poet Maya Angelou suggested that, "If we lose love and self respect for each other, this is how we finally die."

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In summary, I hope you will take time to think about the underpinnings your own future will be designed and built upon. Invest your time and energy in endeavors that hone your skills and broaden your range of abilities that will help you during your passage from youth to older age (notice I didn't say "old" age).

Preparing, planning, prioritizing, being positive and persevering are all abilities, talents if you will, that you can practice and become proficient in. They will serve you well in managing demands and finding balance within every arena of life as it unfolds.

My thanks and unwavering support go out to the sponsors of today's program including:

- SC State University's Department of Human Sciences and Criminal Justice Department and the Career Development Center;
- The Criminal Justice Department staff including: Professor Giselle White-Perry, Professor Margie Ballard-Mack, Professor Andre Thompson and Adjunct Professor Gwen Bright who also works for my Department; and,

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- Dr. Boon, the Department Head for the Department of Human Services and Criminal Justice Program.

Once again, it was my privilege to be invited today and I will conclude my remarks with one final quote that is as relevant to life in general as it is about finding your future. It is by Ms. Ella Fitzgerald and she said, "It isn't where you came from, it's where you're going that counts." I can tell that you all are going places!! I wish you good journey and God bless.